

WASHINGTON, DC – Congresswoman Gwen Moore, a co-sponsor of H.R. 1913, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act- a bill that will give local law enforcement agencies vital tools to combat violent hate crimes; today released the following statement on its passage:

“Violence committed against someone with the intention of intimidating the community is absolutely unacceptable. Current law recognizes that when someone is targeted because of their race, religion, color or national origin it elevates the threat to the entire community and it is a hate crime, but unfortunately, the current definition falls short. Presently, hate crimes are only recognized under federal law if the victim is engaged in a federally protected activity such as voting. In addition, the current definition does not include crimes motivated by a victim’s gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

“In defining a hate crime we recognize that violence perpetrated upon someone because of race, religion, color and national origin is wrong. However, not until now are we truly acknowledging that the same type of violence and harassment that countless Americans face because of their gender or sexual orientation is just as heinous and appalling. This bill will finally provide the same type of protections to those victimized because of sexual orientation as those victimized because of religion, race and ethnicity.

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are disproportionately affected by hate violence. According to the FBI, 16.6% of hate crime victims in 2007 were victims of crimes motivated by hatred of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. I have been and will continue to be a firm believer that all Americans, including the LGBT population, have the fundamental right to feel safe in their communities.

“Many do not realize that under current law if one is victimized because of his or her religion it is not considered a hate crime unless the victim is patronizing a public venue or is engaged in another type of federally protected activity. This bill will expand the definition of a hate crime so if a criminal act is committed with the intent to intimidate a certain community- no matter where and when it is committed- law enforcement officials will be able to prosecute the perpetrator(s) to the fullest extent of the law.

“It is my hope that with an increased Democratic majority and a new Administration, this bill will finally be passed into law. Every American regardless of race, religion, color, gender or sexual orientation should never have to be a victim of a hate crime and this bill will help ensure that if one is a victim of hate violence, local law enforcement has the tools necessary to prosecute offenders.

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